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THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

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OF THE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

BY

ANDREW HUSSEY ALLEN,
Chief of the Bureau of Rolls and Library

From the Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1894.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE,
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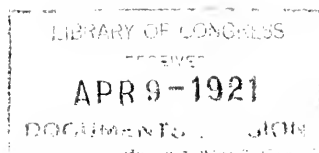
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XVII.—THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

By ANDREW HUSSEY ALLEN, Chief of the Bureau of Rolls and Library.

The historical archives deposited in the Department of State, by several acts of Congress, for preservation, and presumably with the purpose of ultimate publication, are regarded without material divergence of intelligent opinion as the most valuable collection of documents extant upon the early political history of the nation. But a lack of popular knowledge touching their volume, value, condition, and accessibility has within a few years by persistent fostering been developed into a serious misconception of the Department's purposes respecting their uses—a misconception which finally appeared last year in a public statement of the nature of an assault upon the Department by a prominent member of this association (formerly its president), untimely, unjustified, and further confusing the situation. The purpose of this paper, within the brief time and space allotted, is, at this, the earliest opportunity, to correct this misapprehension, so far as possible, first, by a statement of facts in contradiction, and secondly, by such assurances as incidental comment may convey.

These archives are virtually held in trust by the Department for the use of historical writers and students, and it is their devotion to that use with which their custodians are concerned.

The collections comprise:

(1) The records and papers of the Continental Congress, in 307 volumes, folio, deposited in the custody of the Secretary of State by the acts of Congress of July 27, 1789, and September 15, 1789, entitled, respectively, "An act for establishing an Executive Department, to be denominated the Department of Foreign Affairs," and "An act to provide for the safe-keeping of the acts, records, and seal of the United States, and for other purposes."

(2) The papers of George Washington, in 336¹ volumes, folio, bought by authority of the acts of June 30, 1834, and March 3, 1849, entitled, respectively, "An act to enable the Secretary of State to purchase the papers and books of General Washington," and "An act making appropriations for the civil and diplomatic expenses of Government," etc. Both acts direct "the said books and papers to be deposited and preserved in the Department of State." The former of these two acts appropriates \$25,000 and the latter \$20,000, making the total cost of the Washington papers \$45,000.

(3) The papers of James Madison, in 75 volumes, quarto (new binding), bought under the act of May 31, 1848, entitled "An act to provide for the purchase of the manuscript papers of the late James Madison, former President of the United States." This act appropriates for its purpose \$25,000, and provides for the "delivery" of the papers "to the Secretary of State, with a proper conveyance of title to the United States."

(4) The papers of Thomas Jefferson, in 137 volumes, quarto, bought at a cost of \$20,000, appropriated by the act of August 12, 1848, entitled "An act making appropriations for the civil and diplomatic expenses of Government," etc. This act contains the proviso "That the said T. J. Randolph shall deposit all the said papers and manuscripts of a public nature in the State Department, and execute a conveyance thereof to the United States," and carries an appropriation of \$6,000 for the publication of the papers.

(5) The papers of Alexander Hamilton, in 65 volumes, folio, bought by authority of the act of August 12, 1848, just cited, under the same conditions as those governing the purchase of the Jefferson collection, at a cost of \$20,000, and to be published at an expenditure of \$6,000, also provided.

(6) The papers of James Monroe, in 22 volumes, quarto (new binding), bought at a cost of \$20,000 under the act of March 3, 1849, which provided for the purchase of the second part of the Washington Papers, and for these papers, in this language: "And that a like sum be appropriated for the purchase of the manuscript books and papers of the late James Monroe, to be deposited in like manner in the Department."

¹Of this collection, 37 volumes, known as the "Army Returns," were transferred to the War Department November 24, 1894, under the act of Congress of August 18, 1894.

(7) The papers of Benjamin Franklin, in 32 volumes, quarto (new binding), bought at a cost of \$35,000 by authority of the act of August 7, 1882, entitled "An act making appropriations for sundry civil expenses of the Government," etc., which contained the following provision:

To enable the Secretary of State to purchase the manuscript papers of Benjamin Franklin, and the collection of books, and so forth, known as the Franklin collection, belonging to Henry Stevens of London, thirty-five thousand dollars; the printed books, pamphlets, and newspapers, and one of the typewriter copies of the manuscripts to be deposited in the Library of Congress, and the residue to be preserved in the Department of State.

The Government of the United States has, as it appears, expended \$165,000 in the acquisition of the papers of these six commanding figures in its history—papers that are, of course, priceless from the view point of the historian. And yet these six collections compared with the collected papers of the Continental Congress—"the great committee on the conduct of the war"—are far overshadowed in importance and more than half equaled in volume.

The papers came to the Department in various stages of preservation, incompleteness, and dilapidation.

The collection of Franklin only was received after careful restoration and binding. His papers had been collected and arranged by Henry Stevens, of Vermont, a resident of London, and an archivist of experience and accomplishment, whose methods have formed the Department's model for later work on the same lines.

The condition of a part, at least, of the Washington Papers was more precarious than that of any other collection, while the Jeffersons were the best preserved.

The secretary of the American Historical Association, in his report of the proceedings of the ninth annual meeting held at Chicago, in 1893, quotes this paragraph from Mr. W. F. Poole's report of the same meeting, published in the *Independent*:

The historical papers in the State Department are not accessible to the historical student except as a special favor, and they are not arranged, classified, and calendared. The State Department has no space for historical archives and no archivist who understands their management or has time to give to the needs of historical investigators. Indeed these are not the functions of the State Department. At Ottawa, however, Canada has a department of archives; it is an excellent one, and under the

charge of a most competent archivist. American historians, when they need to consult the original documents relating to our own history, often go to Ottawa to see papers which should be in Washington.

These few sentences present the case with compactness and comprehensiveness; their authorship is respectable, and they bear the official indorsement of this association.

"The historical papers in the State Department," says the report, "are not accessible to the historical student except as a special favor, and they are not arranged, classified, and calendared."

About the time at which that statement was made the division of the Department charged with the custody of these archives was engaged in completing the restoration, arrangement, and binding of the Madison Papers, to render them freely accessible, and in liberalizing, so far as practicable, the regulations governing the use of the several collections by investigators. The restoration, arrangement, and binding of the Monroe collection had been completed and a calendar of the papers contained in it had been in print and distributed within the limit of the edition since 1890-91.

There were in the Bureau of Rolls and Library at the same time, besides earlier indexes, a completed calendar in manuscript of the Madison Papers which, printed, comprises 739 imperial octavo pages, or about 9,000 entries in small type; a completed calendar of the Jefferson collection of twice the volume of the Madison calendar, and a partially completed index of the Jefferson Papers still in progress which, when finished, will equal in extent the calendar of the latter collection.

These calendars were the work of Mr. Walter Manton, of the rolls division, prosecuted with an intelligent industry and devotion that runs no risk of being overestimated, while their compiler found time to answer many hundreds of letters involving long and careful searches in the Revolutionary archives for information of individual military services sought by candidates for admission to the various Revolutionary societies lately organized. Early in the year 1893 an index of the papers of the Continental Congress was begun, and it has since been continued. The papers selected for the inauguration of this index were those described as "letters alphabetical," a series to the contents of which little, if any, clew existed.

Prior to the summer of 1893 the privilege of personal access to the archives had been accorded to several historical students of eminence, as the History of the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison and the publication by the Putnams of the Franklin, Hamilton, Washington, and Jefferson Papers attest.

In February, 1893, a newspaper published in Washington made and reiterated a statement to the effect that the historical archives in the State Department had not been, or were not then, accessible to the historical student except as a special favor, and complained with some acrimony that discrimination had been exercised against a Western investigator and in favor of an "Eastern coterie" or a "Boston coterie." This charge was so persistently maintained that the attention of Congress was drawn to the matter and a resolution of inquiry was adopted by the House of Representatives and referred to the Committee on the Library.

In presenting the report of that committee, the chairman stated that the editor of the newspaper had appeared before the committee at its first session had said that personally he knew nothing whatever concerning the charges, but had referred to a newspaper colleague, also present, as his authority for them in their published form. The inquiry, thus shifted, was continued until a reference was made to the aggrieved author. "The committee addressed him on the subject," continues the report, "and after considerable delay received the following response."

This response, in the form of an affidavit, recites charges involving delays and evasions, as far back as the spring of 1881, by a former custodian of the archives, at the time of its submission no longer in the service of the Government. The committee sent the papers to the Secretary of State for such comment as he might desire to make, and on the 6th of February he returned them, together with copies of the correspondence on file, saying that they had been found to relate to the conduct of a former custodian of the archives, who had ceased to be an officer of the Government on the 31st of May, 1888, and that they were concerned with questions which (in the Secretary's opinion) the Department could not determine.

The matter is summed up in the first and last paragraphs of the committee's report:

The Committee on the Library, to whom was referred the resolution asking for an investigation of charges of favoritism shown to writers by

subordinates in the library of the State Department, which charges were made in the columns of the Washington Post, unanimously report, after due inquiry, they find no reason for such an investigation.

* * * * *

The committee recommend that the resolution be tabled, and ask to be discharged.

Although the investigation of the subject by Congress was undoubtedly instigated by the newspaper printing the charges, the report of the committee seems to have been unacceptable, for, notwithstanding the conclusion reached by an impartial tribunal, there appeared on the editorial page of the paper of the 16th of February a statement to the effect that the copies of letters transmitted to the committee by the Secretary of State showed on their face that the complainant had been debarred access to the historical papers he desired, while others more favored "were abstracting their contents."

With what animus these stale charges were resuscitated in 1893 does not appear; for in the sworn statement of the author aggrieved this language is used:

Recently having obtained access to a calendar of the Monroe Papers, and having received assurances that there was a change of policy in the Department of State, I have had some copies made.¹ * * *

This episode is related in order that the principal, active, and perhaps only original source of the existing misconception respecting the archives may be known and appreciated.²

The lack of classification mentioned by Mr. Poole is a subject open to the possibility of much discussion. The Department of State has already announced its purpose, under present conditions, touching this important matter, in a note on the index in Bulletin No. 1 of the Bureau of Rolls and Library in these terms:

The existing classification and arrangement of the bound manuscripts (by volume and number) will not be disturbed except where the restoration and preservation of the papers render ripping and rebinding imperative, and in that, as well as in the binding of loose papers, the original classification and arrangement will be followed as closely as may be to avoid the possible confusion consequent upon numerous citations from original manuscripts and references to them by historical writers in their published works.

¹The copies referred to were made in 1891—at least more than a year before the sworn statement.

²House of Representatives, Report No. 2,510, Fifty-second Congress, second session.

The restoration, mounting, and binding of the archives are necessary preliminaries to free and general access to them, while calendars and indexes are essential to the convenient exercise of the privilege of such access.

Before 1886, when work was commenced on the calendars since completed of the papers of Monroe, Madison, and Jefferson, the indexes of the historical archives possessed by the Department consisted of 9 volumes of indexes to the greater part of the papers of the Continental Congress, one volume of indexes to letters to Washington, the indexes accompanying each volume of the transcripts of letters from Washington, a partial list of the Hamilton collection, and the list of the Franklin Papers arranged by Mr. Henry Stevens.

By the sundry civil act, approved on the 2d of March, 1889, the sum of \$3,000 was appropriated "for the restoration, mounting, and binding of certain manuscript letters and papers of Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and others in the Department of State," etc. By the sundry civil act of August 30, 1890, the sum of \$6,000 was appropriated, and by the sundry civil act of August 5, 1892, the sum of \$5,000 for the same purpose. With the \$14,000 thus specifically appropriated, augmented by as much more as the Department could spare from its allotment for "printing and binding," the restoration, mounting, and binding of the archives was begun and carried on.

The papers were taken up in the order of their requirements. The Monroe and Madison collections were not bound nor adequately listed when received by the Department. The work was accordingly begun with the Monroes by a trained force, employed under a contract with Messrs. Pawson and Nicholson, of Philadelphia, reenforced from the Government Printing Office. Upon the completion of these two collections, the former in 22, the latter in 75 quarto volumes, the "Army Returns" of the Washington collection were taken from their old binding in the autumn of 1893 and similarly treated. When 52 volumes had been finished and there remained 3 volumes still to put into leather, this series of papers was transferred to the War Department under the following provision (introduced as an amendment) contained in the sundry civil act of August 18, 1894:

That all military records, such as muster and pay rolls, orders, and reports relating to the personnel or the operations of the armies of the

Revolutionary war and the war of 1812, now in any of the Executive Departments, shall be transferred to the Secretary of War to be preserved, indexed, and prepared for publication.

In the debate on the subject Senator Hoar secured a modification of the form of the original amendment and the adoption of a provision in this language:

That the muster and pay rolls, discharges, and reports relating to the field operations of the army of the Revolutionary war and of the war of 1812, now in any of the Executive Departments, shall be transferred to the Secretary of War to be preserved, indexed, and properly prepared for convenient reference and use: *Provided*, That whenever the head of any Department shall deem the retention of any such records in his Department essential to the convenient transaction of the business thereof, he may direct copies of such records to be transmitted to the War Department in lieu of the originals.

The language of the *law* was a result of the conference on the bill.

In 1893 the Secretary of State asked for \$5,000 to continue the work of restoration and binding and to publish indexes of these manuscripts, and in a letter on the subject to the Secretary of the Treasury, dated October 16, he said:

The \$5,000 asked for to be expended in restoring, binding, and publishing indexes of manuscript papers is designed for use in the care and preservation of the manuscript records of the Continental Congress, deposited with the Secretary of State in accordance with the act creating the "Department of Foreign Affairs," and of the manuscript papers of Washington, bought for \$15,000, appropriated by acts of June 30, 1834, and March 3, 1849; the Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe Papers having been already restored, bound and approximately indexed. The condition of these papers, from age and handling, renders constant care and speedy restoration indispensable to their proper preservation. The indexes contemplated are equally necessary to the use of the collection.

The appropriation was not made, but the work proceeded at the cost of the Department's allotment for "printing and binding," and is still continued at the expense of that fund.¹

Late in the summer of 1893 a bulletin was inaugurated for the purpose of publishing the calendars and indexes of the historical archives, together with certain special papers.

The initial number of this publication, entitled Bulletin of the Bureau of Rolls and Library of the Department of State, and bearing the date of September, 1893, issued from the press early in December of that year.

¹A memorandum of the work done in this direction is appended.

Four numbers have already appeared:

No. 1, September 1, 1893, contains a list of the volumes comprising the papers of the Continental Congress, the beginning of a miscellaneous index of those papers, and an appendix commencing the publication of the documentary history of the Constitution of the United States with the proceedings of the Annapolis convention.

No. 2, November, 1893, contains a new edition of the calendar of the correspondence of James Monroe, with corrections and additions.

No. 3, January, 1894, contains a list of the volumes of the Washington Papers, a continuation of the index of the papers of the Congress, and the proceedings of the Federal convention.

No. 4, March, 1894, contains a calendar of the correspondence of James Madison.

No. 5, May, 1894, still in the printer's hands, contains lists of the volumes of the Madison, Jefferson, Hamilton, Monroe, and Franklin collections, a continuation of the index of the papers of the Congress, the Constitution of the United States as framed by the Federal convention, the proceedings of Congress thereupon, and the ratifications thereof by the several States.

No. 6, July, 1894, contains part 1 of a calendar of the correspondence of Thomas Jefferson—letters from Jefferson.

The remainder of the Jefferson calendar and the index of the Jefferson collection, together with a continuation of the index of the papers of the Congress and an index of the Madison calendar, are awaiting the Public Printer's convenience.

On June 27, 1894, with a scheme of printing in contemplation, the Secretary of State wrote to Senator Mills, of Texas:

I have the honor to inclose herewith for your information and convenient reference a memorandum relating to the "Revolutionary archives" deposited in the Bureau of Rolls and Library in this Department, submitted by the Chief of that Bureau in January last at about the period of our interview upon a project you had in mind for the printing of these valuable historical papers, many of which are greatly in need of permanent protection against the fading and decaying processes of time.

The permanent preservation and use of these papers, however, are dependent upon the adoption of measures for putting them into print and for distributing them in published form, at least to the great libraries and the principal centers of learning and scholarship throughout the country. With this end in view, I can not perhaps more adequately impress upon you the importance and urgency of the matter than by

reference to Mr. Bayard's report¹ and President Cleveland's special message of April 12, 1888, printed in Senate Ex. Doc. No. 142, Fiftieth Congress, first session, inviting the attention of Congress to the desirability as well as the necessity of the publication.

The deposit of these collections by law in this Department, as shown in the inclosed memorandum, the experience involved in their preservation, the knowledge acquired of their contents, the work already done upon them, and the expertness in accurate proof-reading, derived from the duty of promulgation of the laws of the United States by the Bureau having these papers in charge, combine in my judgment to render their publication a duty of this Department and a task more appropriately subject to its supervision than to that of any other branch or office of the Government, and I earnestly recommend an appropriation of \$25,000 for this purpose.

As a specimen of printing along the projected line, I send herewith copy of Bulletin No. 3 of the Bureau of Rolls and Library, the appendix to which contains a literal print of the "Proceedings of the Federal convention" from the papers of the Continental Congress.

On the 28th of June, 1894, Senator Mills offered in the Senate this amendment to the sundry civil bill then pending:

To enable the Secretary of State to publish the Revolutionary archives now deposited in the Department of State, twenty-five thousand dollars, of which sum not exceeding ——— dollars may be used in the employment of copyists and other necessary clerical assistance.

The amendment was referred to the Committee on the Library, favorably reported by that committee, and referred to the Committee on Appropriations. The chairman of that committee reported it to the Senate, as the Record recites, on the 31st of July:

MR. COCKRELL. After line 17, on page 127, is the appropriate place for the amendment of the Senator from Texas [Mr. Mills] about publishing some state documents.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment will be stated.

THE SECRETARY. Add after line 17, page 127: "To enable the Secretary of State to publish the Revolutionary archives now deposited in the Department of State, \$10,000."

The amendment was agreed to.

When the bill emerged from the subsequent conference the amendment was modified so as to read—

The Secretary of State is hereby directed to cause the Revolutionary archives, except the military records, now deposited in his Department to

¹ Mr. Bayard's report was accompanied by forty or more inclosures in the shape of letters from prominent writers and students of history commending his plan, and was a strong presentation of the necessities and desires of the Department and the friends of the papers. There was no practical result. But a resolution of August 13, 1888, authorized the publication of Wharton's edition of the Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, recently completed.

be carefully examined, and to ascertain what portions are of sufficient importance and historical value to publish, and the number of printed volumes they would make, and the reasonable cost of their publication and editing, and report the result to Congress, with such recommendations as he may deem proper.

And so the matter was concluded.

Funds for the preservation and publication of the papers of the Continental Congress have been provided by legislation to the aggregate amount of about \$200,000 since the first year of the century; and for the preservation and publication of the six personal collections of these historical archives the total of appropriations is less than \$25,000 in fifty years. Since the close of the war of the rebellion the total of appropriations for the publication of the Rebellion Records approaches \$2,000,000, and will probably reach \$2,700,000.

From the historical archives the papers published with the money thus appropriated are the Journals of Congress and the Secret Journal; The Journal of the Federal Convention; 9 volumes of the *Force Archives*; the *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*, by Sparks; the same, later, by Wharton; 3 volumes of *Diplomatic Correspondence, 1783 to 1789*, covering the first six years after the peace, by Sparks; the *Madison Papers*, the *Jefferson Papers*, the *Hamilton Papers*. All the publications, except the Journal of the Federal Convention, were imperfect, but none more so than the Journals of Congress.

"The State Department," Mr. Poole continues, "has no space for historical archives and no archivist who understands their management or has time to give to the needs of historical investigators. Indeed, these are not the functions of the State Department."

That the Department of State lacks convenient space for its *offices* is in a measure true; but there is space to spare in the building, and an act of Congress allotting it is all that is necessary, for the Department's original space was reduced by legislation transferring it to the neighboring Departments.

That the Department has no archivist who understands the management of historical manuscripts is a statement that possesses the merit of novelty, whatever it may lack. The Department of State is the only Department of the Government that has treated old archives scientifically, and the papers, restored and bound, speak for themselves.

The Department has no archivist who "has time to give to the needs of historical investigators," says Mr. Poole. On the contrary, the custodian of the manuscripts has time and has always had time to give to the needs of historical investigators, within reasonable bounds. These bounds are indicated in two passages of a letter of October 18, 1890, by the Second Assistant Secretary of State. He wrote:

First. The Department can not undertake to do any part of the work of an editor or a compiler.

Secondly. It neither has anyone who could properly take the responsibility of making any selection of papers for a private citizen, nor has it a sufficient force to enable it to copy the papers after selection has been made.

But copyists have been repeatedly, and are constantly accommodated.

One of the functions of the Department of State conferred by the acts creating it an Executive Department is the care of the historical archives of the Continental Congress. That function has been continuously and is still exercised, according to the means provided, by a force trained to the custody and preservation of some of the most valuable archives of the Government—the laws of the United States since the foundation of the nation, and the treaties with foreign powers since the treaty of February 6, 1778, with France.

I have said that the purpose of the Department of State was to make these papers accessible to historical investigators. With that purpose in view the Department is doing everything permitted by its resources. It can hardly with propriety be advertised in the newspapers, nor committed to a general circular of information to be distributed indiscriminately without solicitation. It has, however, during the past year been made known by the Bulletin, and earlier, presumably, through persons exercising the privilege of access. It has been obstructed during the same period by the newspaper assault recited, and by the paragraph in a report of the last annual meeting of this association already quoted. All adverse action, as I have suggested, is perhaps traceable to one source. But whether that be so or not, we may properly consider the apparent difference of motive. In its constitution this association declares that "its object shall be the promotion of historical studies." Mr. Poole's mistaken assertions were undoubtedly made from impersonal motives, with that object in

mind. Beyond the revival of a personal attack upon a former custodian of the papers, the only evident object of the newspaper was a sensation. The newspaper charges, considered by an unbiased committee and disposed of, may safely be eliminated from further consideration here as an obstruction to the profitable uses of the archives.

The object of this association, so far as these precious papers are concerned, can just now be served better by the exercise of its influence for legislative action providing for the preservation and publication of the papers than by the suggestion or promotion of measures looking to the erection of a hall of records. Let that come later.

An augmentation of the force engaged in the work of preservation and enlargement of space by acquisition of one or two additional rooms are the pressing needs. Government building is slow; the completion of such a depository as a hall of records is somewhat remote, however desirable. The papers in their present condition can not be expected to survive time and wear indefinitely. They have not been dipped in the fountain of Ponce de Leon's quest; they can not be withheld from inspection, except when actually in the hands of the restorers. On the other hand the work can not properly progress in haste. Experience and skill are essential to its adequate performance. It is hardly worth while to spend effort in combating extreme theories. These manuscripts can not be shuffled like cards nor rushed into print like a newspaper "extra."

Meanwhile access to them will continue to be asked and accorded without special favor, and with no further discrimination of individuals by the Department than that involved in a necessary ascertainment of the carefulness, responsibility, and good faith of the investigator, a discrimination which will probably debar only curiosity seekers and unaccredited persons, a class with which the custodians of the archives have had comparatively little or no acquaintance.

A comprehensive announcement on the subject of access has already been made in these terms by order of the Secretary of State:

The privilege of access to the manuscript archives of the Department of State may be secured, so far as the facilities at command and the convenience of the office admit, upon application by letter to the Secretary of State. Applicants should describe as concisely and definitely as may be possible the papers they desire to consult, the scope of the examination

contemplated, and the period of time during which they purpose to avail themselves of the permission if accorded.

The privilege is to be exercised under the following

SPECIAL RULES.

I. Persons to whom the privilege of consulting the manuscript archives of the Department of State is granted can exercise the permission only subject to the convenience of the Department and the uninterrupted transaction of its business.

II. No manuscript shall at any time be taken out of the Department except by order in writing of the Secretary or an Assistant Secretary.

III. No manuscript shall be taken out of the Bureau of Rolls and Library into any room of the Department until a receipt in form and descriptive of the paper or volume be signed by the official taking the same and delivered to the Chief of the Bureau, or, in his absence, to the person in charge.

IV. No manuscript shall be detained from its place on the shelves of the Bureau of Rolls and Library after 4 p. m. of the day it shall have been taken; and no manuscript shall be taken from its place on the shelves by any others than the clerks in charge, except by special arrangement in exceptional circumstances.

V. The use of the indexes in the room in which the old archives are deposited is not permitted except through the clerks in charge.

VI. The privilege of consulting the manuscript archives does not include the use of the library. The latter privilege must be independently asked of the Chief of the Bureau of Rolls and Library.

To deal practically with these historical papers this association should place itself in accord with the Department or direct its efforts to the modification or enlargement of existing official methods—whichever course may seem the wiser. It is not believed that any historical student has been deterred from seeking access to the archives by any other than exterior agents, of which, since the publication of its last annual report, the American Historical Association must be considered one. It is hardly necessary for me to add that it is not believed that Mr. Poole would have made the report he did make upon a condition of affairs respecting these papers as existing in 1893, had he or any reliable representative of his visited the Bureau of Rolls and Library within a year or two preceding the date of his statement, when the facts at first hand were obtainable and were not in agreement with his authority.

The depository of these archives—the Department of State—has offices in a fireproof building of stone and iron that has been justly described as superior to any other building in the world for Government uses. The danger described by the

author of a paper presented at the last meeting of this association, "that by a single accident the nation might be stripped of these treasures of the past," is reduced to the least minimum by care and watchfulness. The most precious of the archives—the two great charters—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States—are preserved in a steel case in the iron hall of the library of the Department. And it does not seem to be commonly known that the Secretary of State forbade their transmission to Chicago for exhibition at the World's Fair at the risk of a railway accident in transit and fire after their arrival—hazards sufficiently apparent and by no means trivial.

The Declaration had come to the Department of State from the Continental Congress. It had been subjected to a process early in the century, in securing a facsimile for a copperplate, that caused the ink to fade and the parchment to deteriorate. It had been deposited on the 11th of June, 1841, in the Patent Office, then a Bureau of the Department of State, and when that office was transferred with its records to the Interior Department by act of March 3, 1849, the Declaration had gone there to be placed on exhibition in a brilliant light, causing further dimness and decay. It was returned to the Department of State in March, 1877, upon the completion of fireproof quarters, and after exhibition at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and placed in the library of the Department. In February of 1894 it was put away out of the light and air, and this notice was posted on the exhibition case:

The rapid fading of the text of the original Declaration of Independence and the deterioration of the parchment upon which it is engrossed from exposure to the light and from lapse of time render it impracticable for the Department longer to exhibit or to handle it.

For the secure preservation of its present condition, so far as may be possible, it has been carefully wrapped and placed flat in a steel case, and the rule that it shall not be disturbed for exhibition purposes must be impartially and rigidly observed.

In lieu of the original document a facsimile is placed here.

By order of the Secretary of State.

The plate for engraving facsimile copies is now in the Office of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, in order that an "alto" and a "basso" may be made from it for electrotyping copies.

When this process shall have been completed the plate will be covered and carefully stored with the Department's archives. For, while the full text of the original Declaration is legible,

the signatures have with but few exceptions vanished; and so the value of the copperplate is inestimably enhanced.¹

All the documents relating to the Constitution are being carefully printed through the medium of the Bulletin of the Bureau of Rolls and Library in a documentary history. Bulletin Nos. 1, 3, and 5 are completed, carrying the narrative through the ratifications by the several States. The documents are literally printed; all the proof is closely and thoroughly read twice, and later revised with scrupulous care to insure accuracy.

Thus about all that can be done has been or will be done for the permanent preservation of these two historic records.

But as time closes something is necessarily left unsaid. Contradiction of generally accepted statements is unavoidable in an endeavor to correct existing error touching the manuscript collections of the Department of State; but the contradiction is incidental to the purpose. The purpose has been, without ulterior aim, to relate the facts, to present the situation, and to announce to all interested investigators the liberal desire of the Department to aid them to the extent of its resources of time, space, force, and funds, and its disposition to enlarge those resources by the reasonable and appropriate means compatible with the object sought—the object sought both by the custodians of these historical archives and the American Historical Association—the promotion of the study and knowledge of the history of the nation and the preservation of its records.

MEMORANDUM ON THE RESTORATION, MOUNTING, AND BINDING OF THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVES.

The process of restoration involves a strengthening of each paper requiring it, and the piecing out of ragged edges, by a trained process.

The mounting comprises the attachment of each paper to a linen hinge, which is in turn affixed to a sheet of heavy "ledger paper," also provided with a linen hinge.

The binding is in volumes of half leather and cloth, of a weight not too great to bear handling, and of the size and shape of a large quarto. The present purpose is to reduce the length and breadth of the volumes, while maintaining a uniform thickness.

¹Since this paper was read the work of the Coast and Geodetic Survey indicated has been completed, and the original copper-plate of the Declaration has been placed in a fireproof safe.

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Since July, 1889, there have been restored, mounted, and bound :

	Vols.
The Madison Papers.....	75
The Monroe Papers.....	22
The "Army Returns" (Washington Papers).....	52
Papers relating to the treason of Arnold and the trial of André.....	1

Several individual papers in the Washington collection have been inlaid, bound, and boxed by reason of special and unique value, and 1 volume of the papers of the Continental Congress has been similarly treated. They are—

	Vol.
Forms of writing (Washington Papers).....	1
School copybook (Washington Papers).....	1
"The United States in Account with G. Washington".....	1
Meteorological record (Washington Papers).....	1
Diaries 1, 2, and 3, in one box (Washington Papers).....	1
"Rough" Journal of Congress (Papers of the Congress).....	1

During the same period there have been restored and mounted, but not bound—

Privateer bonds of the Revolution :	Bonds.
Maryland.....	142
Massachusetts.....	518
Pennsylvania.....	571
New Jersey.....	4
Rhode Island.....	11
South Carolina.....	1
Virginia.....	62
Connecticut.....	166
New Hampshire.....	104
Miscellaneous.....	12

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Continental Congress:

Reports of committees on application of individuals—	Sheets.
Vol. 1, No. 19, 627 pages.....	243
Vol. 2, No. 19, 535 pages.....	180
Vol. 3, No. 19, 623 pages.....	240
Vol. 4, No. 19, 533 pages.....	200
Vol. 5, No. 19, 587 pages.....	240
Vol. 6, No. 19, 607 pages.....	270
Reports of committees, vol. 30, 623 pages.....	271
Reports of committees, vol. 31, 387 pages.....	155
Reports of committees, vol. 28, 323 pages.....	132
Reports of committees on the state of the week, 633 pages.....	250
Applications and recommendations for office, chiefly Revolutionary officers, 258 pages.....	263
Reports of committees of conference, 427 pages.....	172
Articles of Confederation, 319 pages.....	120
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Reports of committees on the War Office, 109 pages.....	114

Continental Congress—Continued.	Sheets.
Motions in Congress.....	2, 170
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Papers relative to mutiny, 1783, and the "peace establishment," 483 pages.....	158
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Letters and papers of the committee of 1780, 149 pages.....	164
Circular letters and miscellaneous reports, 482 pages.....	187
New Hampshire grants No 40—	
Vol. 1, 579 pages.....	225
Vol. 2, 483 pages.....	178
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Vol. 1, 481 pages.....	149
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Vol. 6, 532 pages.....	151
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Oaths of Allegiance (Army Returns). Washington Papers, part 2 of Vol. I and parts 1 and 2 of Vol. II.	
Jefferson Papers, series 4, Vol. 1, "Notes Memorandums" while Secre- tary of State, 614 pages, 614 sheets.	
NOVEMBER 30, 1894.	

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